

**Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens  
Powder River Basin Resource Council**

**NEWS STATEMENT**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 14, 2014**

**Impacted Landowners shocked by Wyoming Regulatory Conclusions on Pavillion Area  
Groundwater Investigation**

Pavillion, Wyoming—Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (PACC) are shocked and disappointed by a Wyoming regulator's conclusions that groundwater contamination in the Pavillion, WY area is not from oil and gas development.

In December of 2011, the EPA released a draft report on their four year investigation of groundwater contamination in the Pavillion area. The investigation was turned over to Wyoming last summer for completion. In a Casper Star Tribune article released on February 13<sup>th</sup>, Robert Johnson, a former Wyoming official, backed away from his October statement in which he said the Pavillion contamination was from oil and gas development. In the article Johnson said a recent conversation with Grant Black, Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission Supervisor, convinced him he was "dead incorrect" to attribute pollution to industry. "He set me straight and told me I was wrong," Johnson said.

Chair of Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens and Powder River Basin Resource Council Board Member, John Fenton says, "This is unbelievable and unacceptable! It appears that the State has already reached conclusions about the investigation of Pavillion area groundwater contamination before they've released findings or even hired experts to review their analysis. Governor Mead and the State regulators made a huge issue of how inadequate the EPA investigation was, but at least the EPA used sound science to establish their draft conclusions. How did Supervisor Black reach his conclusion?"

In December 2011 the EPA released the draft report of its scientific investigation into the connection between oil and gas development and contamination of drinking water wells. After initial testing in August 2010, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) urged residents not to drink their water or use it for cooking. EPA's draft findings show that hazardous chemicals, commonly used in oil and gas development, contaminated groundwater and drinking water wells in the Pavillion area.

EnCana Oil & Gas USA, which owns and operates over 200 gas wells in the Pavillion area denies that drilling is to blame for the contamination stating that many of the toxins "occur naturally." On January 6, 2012, EnCana sent a letter demanding that the EPA suspend the public comment period on the report claiming that the agency didn't give the company copies of all the data it used to compile the report. The Petroleum Association of Wyoming and Wyoming Water

Development Commission accused the EPA of not following its own water-testing protocols by holding several water well samples two days too long before conducting tests.

“The EPA conducted a scientifically sound investigation of the contamination in the Pavillion area,” said Wilma Subra, chemist, president of Subra Company, and board member of the State Review of Oil & Natural Gas Environmental Regulations (STRONGER). “Problems with hold times are very common and this did not compromise the results. If anything, longer hold times make the results less likely to indicate contamination,” Subra stated.

Toxic chemicals were found in nearly 9 out of every 10 wells sampled. In monitor wells drilled by EPA, benzene, a cancer-causing chemical, was found at 50 times the limit safe for human health along with numerous other toxic chemicals including 2-BE, a chemical used in fracking operations.

“Pavillion residents made continual requests for help from the state of Wyoming and industry before seeking assistance from EPA to address the contamination issues. For over 10 years the state refused to help us. Now that the state is back in control, they are right back in step with industry denying there are any problems from oil and gas,” said Jeff Locker, Pavillion Ag Producer, and Treasurer of Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens.

“It appears that Supervisor Black has reached a conclusion on the Pavillion area investigation before the State has conducted a thorough investigation. His actions, and further refusal to talk to the press, raise the question of the State’s ability to implement the investigation in a balanced and scientific manner.” said Deb Thomas, organizer for Powder River Basin Resource Council. “The State has played politics with the investigation for seven years. With the investigation now under their jurisdiction, it seems that they have pre-judged what the results will be and are trying to suppress public discussion”.

**For more information:**

PRBRC Website: [www.powderriverbasin.org/](http://www.powderriverbasin.org/)

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